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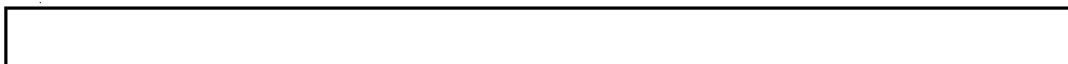
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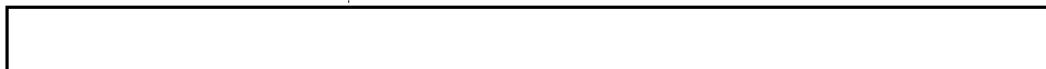
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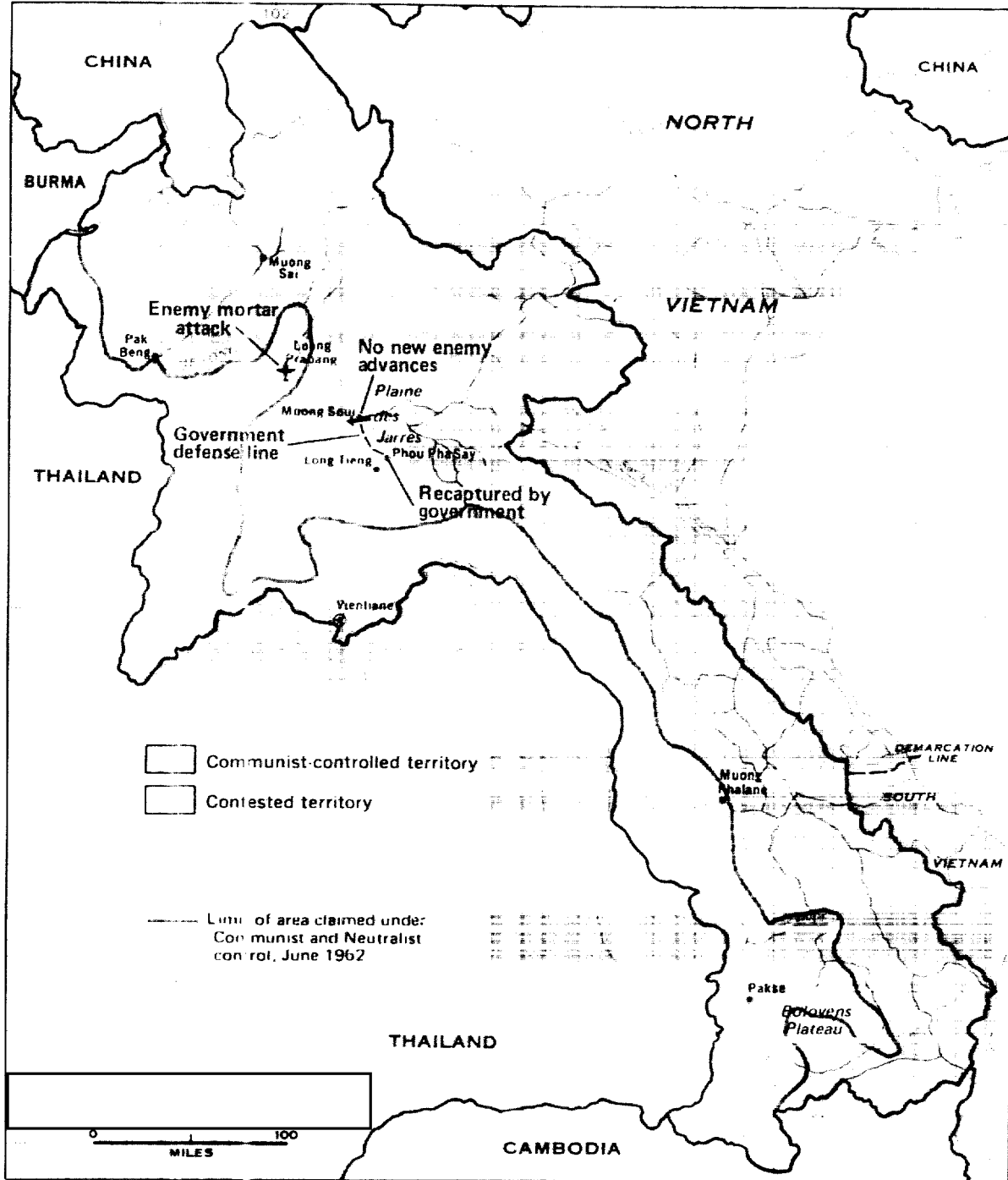
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LAOS: Communist Offensive in North Slows Down



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Laos: The Communist offensive in the north has slowed its pace.

For the past few days, enemy military action west and south of the Plaine des Jarres has remained at a relatively low level. On 27 February government forces easily recaptured the outpost of Phou Pha Say, near Long Tieng, that they had lost earlier the same day. Only one minor clash occurred on 28 February, when a guerrilla patrol encountered 80 North Vietnamese soldiers in an area off the southwest edge of the Plaine. The Muong Soui area also is quiet, and reports indicate that the enemy thus far has not attempted to move farther west down Route 7.

The lull in the fighting probably is due to Communist supply problems. Enemy efforts to move adequate supplies to forward positions undoubtedly are complicated not only by continuing air strikes, but also by the recent government evacuation of 15,000 refugees off the Plaine, which has depleted the local coolie labor force. For his part, General Vang Pao is using this welcome breathing space to reposition more troops to bolster his defensive line protecting Long Tieng.

Elsewhere, on the night of 28 February an unidentified enemy unit directed a brief and inaccurate mortar barrage on the airfield at Luang Prabang. No damage or casualties resulted. The Communists have attacked the airfield in previous years.

In Vientiane, Pathet Lao representative Sot Petrasi said in a press interview on 27 February that unless the bombing of Communist forces stops, the current offensive will go beyond the 1962 cease-fire line. He also said that if the bombing is halted, the Communists may discontinue their attacks before reaching the 1962 line. These remarks are clearly intended to play on government apprehension over the direction and extent of the present Communist campaign.



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Fedayeen Activity Increases Along Lebanese/Israeli Border



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Lebanon-Israel: Fedayeen activity is building up along the border.

Fedayeen groups have reportedly succeeded in infiltrating several hundred of their men into southern Lebanon, despite efforts by the army to confine the commandos to the Mount Hermon area. The new arrivals not only have resumed operations against upper Galilee, but may have opened up a new front in western Galilee as well. They have also begun firing into Israeli territory from Lebanon.

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Meanwhile, some fedayeen organizations have re-instituted full-scale paramilitary training of inhabitants of the Palestinian refugee camps in the country, despite public announcements that such training had ceased. To forestall any government interference in their operations, these organizations are seeking to prevent the re-entry of Lebanese forces into the camps.

Israel is undoubtedly aware of these developments and may believe that it will have to take some retaliatory action. In the past, for example, Israeli Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan has publicly stated that if fedayeen activities continue in southern Lebanon, Israel may find it necessary to move into the area.

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Rhodesia: Today's shift by Rhodesia to a republican status will bring new pressures on the US to close its consulate in Salisbury.

The Ethiopian foreign minister informed the US ambassador in Addis Ababa on 27 February that he believes even moderate black African states will react sharply if the consulate remains open. The foreign minister thought inaction would result in a resolution by the Organization of African Unity strongly condemning the US.

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Prime Minister Ian Smith probably believes if the US retains its mission, other countries such as France, West Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands will do the same. At least some of these other countries reportedly intend to follow the US lead on the issue.

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Arms Control: The UK draft convention to ban the production and use of biological methods of warfare appears to be picking up increased support at the Geneva disarmament talks.



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Italy is expected to support the UK draft convention, and Brazil and Argentina appear sympathetic. India has also been impressed by the argument that agreement on the UK draft would avoid a likely impasse over the more far-reaching Soviet draft treaty to ban both chemical and biological weapons.

Moscow is holding firmly to its draft treaty, but does not appear to be making a big push to secure support for it. The Soviets continue to oppose on-site inspection to verify compliance with any treaty in this field, but

25X1 [redacted] would consider other approaches to verification arrangements, including appeal to the UN Security Council. They are not expected to show signs of movement toward the UK draft at an early date.

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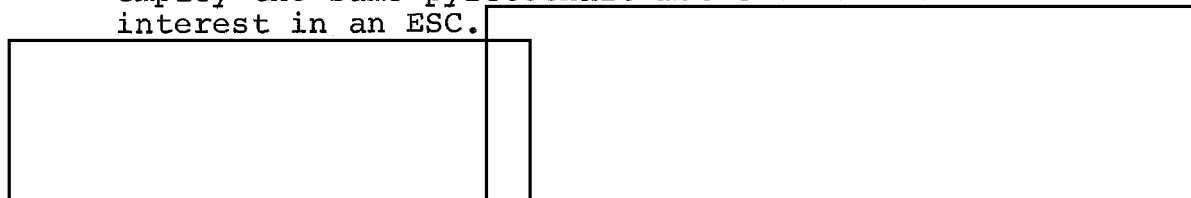
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Hungary-Belgium: Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter's effort to enlist Belgian backing for a European security conference (ESC) appears to have had no effect.

The communiqué issued on Peter's departure from Brussels failed to reflect the urgent need for calling an ESC that Peter had earlier indicated was a common Hungarian-Belgian stand. Continuing differences in essential matters, such as setting up an agenda and preparatory measures, suggest that a reaffirmation of general agreement on the desirability of such a meeting was all that Peter's mission achieved. Furthermore, neither the communiqué nor the Hungarian press has acknowledged the Reuters report on 27 February that quoted Peter as saying that the Warsaw Pact would "study" balanced-force reductions as an ESC agenda item. It now appears that the quotation was probably another of Peter's irrepressible off-hand remarks.

Peter has scheduled official visits to Sweden and Norway later this year, where he will probably employ the same pyrotechnic methods to stir Western interest in an ESC.



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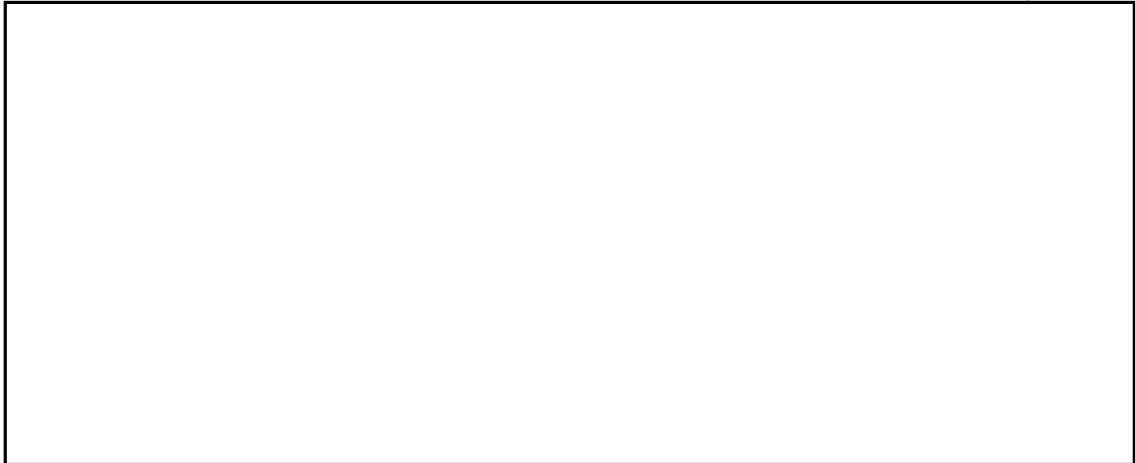
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Guatemala: Yesterday's general elections were held in a surprisingly nonviolent atmosphere, but security forces are alert for trouble when the results of the balloting are released. Although the government is determined to abide by the outcome, the reaction of rightist presidential candidate Colonel Carlos Arana is pivotal to the electoral aftermath. Arana promises to make any complaint of the count through legal channels, but his strong support within the military is of serious concern to the government.

Early returns from the voting are expected today, but both opposition parties have already broadcast charges of government fraud. Voter turnout was heavy in spite of pre-electoral violence and the kidnapping of the foreign minister just before election day.



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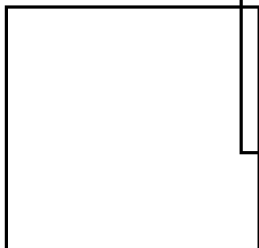
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[Cuba-US: The seizure of a privately-owned US fishing boat by a Cuban patrol boat yesterday is probably the result of Havana's hypersensitivity to exile raids. Castro's security forces are aware that militant exile groups use both fishing boats and merchant ships for infiltration missions, and probably became suspicious of the American boat near the north coast of Camaguey Province. The boat--which reportedly is outfitted for treasure-hunting rather than fishing--was boarded by two Cubans and escorted to the port of La Isabela for inspection. If it did not violate Cuba's three-mile limit, it will probably be released as soon as Havana is satisfied that it was not involved in exile activities.



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